

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01 DHA-02

SCS-03 OPR-02 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 EB-07 ACDA-07

SCA-01 FBO-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 COME-00 (ISO) W

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P 040734Z MAY 77

FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8759

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL ADANA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL IZMIR PRIORITY

USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISTANBUL 1514

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: REACTION TO MAY DAY VIOLENCE

REF: ISTANBUL 1503

SUMMARY: BLOODY EVENT AT MAY DAY RALLY IN ISTANBUL IN WHICH 34 PEOPLE WERE KILLED HAS BECOME POLITICAL ISSUE IN TURKEY'S TUMULTUOUS ELECTION CAMPAIGN. PREDICTABLY, LEFTISTS HAVE ACCUSED CENTER-RIGHT GOVERNMENT IN COLLUSION WITH CIA OF BEING PROVOCATEURS OF INCIDENT. HOWEVER, MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL FALLOUT FROM MAY DAY BLOODSHED MAY WELL BE TO NEUTRALIZE OPPOSITION'S MOST TELLING CAMPAIGN ISSUE. ASSOCIATING PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL'S PARTY WITH RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS,

REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) HERETOFORE HAS TO GOOD AFFECT BLAMED IT FOR TURKEY'S CYCLE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. BY EMPHASIZING OPPOSITION PARTY'S TIES WITH LEFTIST LABOR CONFEDERATION WHICH ORGANIZED MAY DAY RALLY, PRIME MINISTER'S SUPPORTERS UNDOUBTEDLY WILL MAKE CASE TO ELECTORATE THAT RPP IS RESPONSIBLE.
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END SUMMARY

1. EVEN THOUGH CITIZENS OF ISTANBUL HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MAY DAY BLOODBATH HAS SHOCKED THEM. WITH BANNER HEADLINES AND GRAPHIC PICTURES OF DEAD IN THE STREETS FRESH IN THEIR MEMORY, THEY ARE NOW TRYING TO SORT OUT WHAT IT ALL MEANS. CLEARLY, INCIDENT OF THIS SCALE WILL HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR

ELECTIONS IN JUNE, AND MAJOR CONTENDERS IN CAMPAIGN WILL INTERPRET IT TO THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE.

2. MAY DAY EVENT MAY TURN OUT TO BE POLITICAL WINDFALL FOR PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL AND HIS SUPPORTERS. POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAS BECOME PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF CAMPAIGN, AND REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) AND ITS MEDIA SUPPORTERS HAVE, WITH SOME AFFECT, SOUGHT TO PIN ONUS FOR VIOLENCE ON DEMIREL AND HIS COALITION PARTNER, NATIONAL ACTION PARTY (NAP). THIS WAS REINFORCED FOLLOWING LAST WEEK'S ARMED ATTACKS ON RPP LEADER ECEVIT'S ENTOURAGE IN EASTERN TURKEY. AS A RESULT, ECEVIT HAS ACQUIRED SOMETHING OF IMAGE OF HEROIC, EMBATTLED FIGURE COURAGEOUSLY CONFRONTING FORCES OF REACTION. DEMIREL'S JUSTICE PARTY (JP) AND OTHER RPP OPPONENTS NOW HAVE OPENING TO INTENSIFY CHARGES THAT RPP IS LINKED WITH LEFTIST EXTREMISTS AND RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVOKING VIOLENCE. JP-ALIGNED NEWSPAPERS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THIS LINE IN THEIR COMMENTARY AND REPORTING ON MAY DAY BLOODSHED. BY EMPHASIZING ALLIANCE BETWEEN RPP AND DISK LABOR CONFEDERATION WHICH ORGANIZED RALLY, JP AND OTHERS WILL LIKELY GET CONSIDERABLE MILAGE FROM THIS ISSUE, PARTICULARLY WITH CONSERVATIVE RURAL VOTERS.

3. HOWEVER, THEY MAY BE SOMEWHAT HANDICAPPED IN THIS EFFORT BECAUSE DISK, DESPITE ITS SUPPORT OF RPP, TOOK CONSIDERABLE PAINS TO GIVE MAY DAY RALLY APPEARANCE OF NON-POLITICAL, LABOR AFFAIR. SLOGANS CHANTED AND SIGNS DISPLAYED HAD NO PARTICULAR PARTISAN HUE. DISK PRESIDENT'S SPEECH CONTAINED NO CALL FOR SUPPORT OF RPP, ALTHOUGH HE WAS CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES. IN ADDITION, OTHER THAN LABOR LEADERS, ONLY PROMINENT RPP FIGURE THAT WE KNOW OF WHO ATTENDED RALLY WAS MAYOR OF ISTANBUL. AND HE HAS CLAIMED CONFIDENTIAL

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HE WAS THERE ONLY IN HIS CAPACITY AS EMPLOYER OF LARGE NUMBER OF WORKERS.

4. MANY LEFTISTS IN TURN HAVE BEEN QUICK TO FIND OTHERS TO BLAME FOR MAY DAY INCIDENT. Q WHILE HOLDING "NATIONAL FRONT" GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE, THEY HAVE ALSO SOUGHT TO IMPLICATE U.S. BY TAGGING CIA AS CULPRITS. IN PARTICULAR, KEMAL TURKLER, PRESIDENT OF DISK, WHO ORGANIZED RALLY, HAS LED FIELD IN LEVELING CHARGE THAT THOSE BEHIND TRAGEDY WERE "FASCISTS AND MAOISTS CONTROLLED BY CIA", IN COLLUSION WITH PRESENT GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, MAY 3 EDITION OF LEFTIST CUMHURIYET NEWSPAPER CARRIED LONG ARTICLE REPORTING VIEWS OF NUMBER OF LEFTIST GROUPS THAT CIA WAS PROVOCATEUR BEHIND INCIDENT.

5. THIS REACTION FROM LEFT WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. DURING WEEKS BEFORE MAY 1, U.S. HAD ALREADY BEEN ACCUSED BY NUMBER OF LEFT-WING COMMENTATORS WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTACKS ON ECEVIT IN EASTERN TURKEY THROUGH SUPPOSED CIA MANIPULATION OF RIGHT-WING GROUPS. THESIS HAS NOW BEEN STRETCHED TO USING "MAOISTS" FOR SAME PURPOSE.

RATIONALE GENERALLY PUT FORTH IS THAT U.S. SEEKS TO PROVOKE CHAOTIC SITUATION IN TURKEY WHICH WOULD BRING MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO POWER AND THEREBY CANCEL ELECTIONS. LEFTISTS CONTEND U.S. SUPPOSEDLY OPPOSED TO UPCOMING ELECTIONS WHICH WILL BRING "DEMOCRATIC LEFT", LED BY RPP, TO POWER.

6. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TURKISH PUBLIC HAS BEEN GIVEN SOME REASONED VIEWS BY INFLUENTIAL SOURCES OF CAUSES MAY DAY TRAGEDY. AMONG THESE WERE A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL IN TURKEY'S LARGEST CIRCULATION DAILY, HURRIYET, WHICH DISCOUNTS ATTEMPTS TO BLAME OUTSIDERS AND TAKES VIEW THAT "WE ARE ALL TO BLAME". TURKEY'S LEADING COLUMNIST ABDI IPEKCI ATTRIBUTED TRAGEDY TO POLARIZATION IN INTERNAL POLITICS. SO FAR RPP LEADERS HAVE NOT LEVELLED ANY CHRGES. ECEVIT HAS LIMITED HIS COMMENTS ON MAY DAY EVENTS TO EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO DEMAL TURKLER.

7. COMMENT: CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES ON CAUSES OF MAY DAY
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BLOODSHED WILL NO DOUBT PROLIFERATE DURING REMAINING MONTH OF EMOTIONALLY CHARGED AND INCREASINGLY VIOLENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN. CIA CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE FASHIONABLE WITH MANY TURKISH LEFTISTS AND ACCUSATIONS AGAINST CIA ARE VIRTUALLY A KNEE-JERK REACTION, AS THEY LOOK FOR SCAPEGOAT TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED ON MAY DAY. RECENT AIRING OF BBC DOCUMENTARY ON CIA OVER TURKISH NATIONAL TELEVISION UNDOUBTEDLY FED THIS NEUROSIS. BUT ELECTION UP TO NOW HAS AND LIKELY WILL CONTINUE TO CENTER ON DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS. ALLEGATIONS OF OUTSIDE FORCES' INVOLVEMENT ASIDE, MAY DAY EVENTS HAVE GIVEN JP A HANDLE ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE ISSUE -- ON WHICH OUTCOME OF ELECTION MAY HINGE--WHICH COULD DISTINCTLY IMPROVE ITS ELECTION PROSPECTS IT SEEMS TO US THAT OPPOSITION WILL HAVE VERY DIFFICULT TIME CREDITABLY EXPLAINING MAY DAY VIOLENCE AS ANYTHING BUT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LEFTIST GROUPS. ALTHOUGH AUTHORITIES STATIONED RIOT POLICE AROUND TAKSIM AND QUASI-MILITARY JANDARMA WERE ON STANDBY TO CONTAIN ANY OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE, THEY LEFT POLICING OF RALLY TO DISK ORGANIZERS THEMSELVES. DISK ACCEPTED THIS RESPONSIBILITY AND, AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, THOUSANDS OF BATON-WEILDING DISK PARAGE MARSHALLS WERE ON HAND TO MAINTAIN ORDER (THD THEY ACCOMPLISHED THIS IN HIGHLY DISCIPLINED MANNER UNTIL SHOOTING BROKE OUT). SINCE IT WAS FROM ALL APPEARANCES DISPUTE BETWEEN LEFTISTS, INCIDENT WILL NO DOUBT BE USED BY NON-LEFT IN ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE ELECTORATE THAT PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL CIOLENCE SHOULD NOT BE BLAMED ON RIGHT WING EXTREMISTS, AS RPP SUPPORTERS HAVE LONG SSERTED. IF JP CAN MAKE CASE THAT RPP SHARES RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAY DAY BLOOD-SHED BECAUSE OF ITS TIES WITH DISK, IT WILL BE ABLE TO NEUTRALIZE ONE OF RPP'S MOST TELLING CAMPAIGN ISSUES.

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